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OFFICE OF PETITIONS

VERNOIS GOULVEN
1 RUE DES CHALETS
VELIZY , FRANCE 78140

In re Application of
Vernois Goulven
Application No. 08/809,620
Filed: February 5, 1998
For: Telescope

DECISION
ON PETITION

This is a decision on the petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a), filed June 29, 2001, to revive the above-identified application.

The petition is **DISMISSED**.

Any request for reconsideration or petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a) must be submitted within TWO (2) MONTHS from the mail date of this decision. Extension of time under 37 CFR 1.136(a) are permitted. The reconsideration request should include a cover letter entitled "Renewed Petition Under 37 CFR 1.137(a)." This is **not** a final agency action within the meaning of 5 U.S.C § 704.

The above-identified application became abandoned for failure to reply in a timely manner to the non-final Office action mailed July 8, 1999, which set a shortened statutory period for reply of three (3) months. On November 5, 1999, an amendment was received (along with a one month extension of time), but this amendment was not deemed to be fully responsive. On April 11, 2001, a letter of nonresponsiveness was sent to the petitioner, which set a period of one month to reply. No extensions of time under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a) were obtained. Accordingly, the above-identified application became abandoned on May 12, 2001. A Notice of Abandonment was mailed on May 31, 2001.

A grantable petition under 37 CFR 1.137(a)[1] must be accompanied by: (1) the required reply,[2] unless previously filed; (2) the petition fee as set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(l); (3) a showing to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to this paragraph was unavoidable; and (4) any terminal disclaimer required by 37 CFR 1.137(c).

The instant petition lacks item (3) above.

As to item (3), the showing of record is not sufficient to establish to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that the delay was unavoidable within the meaning of 37 CFR 1.137(a).

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[1] As amended effective December 1, 1997. See Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure; Final Rule Notice 62 Fed. Reg. 53131, 53194-95 (October 10, 1997), 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office 63, 119-20 (October 21, 1997).

[2] In a nonprovisional application abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may be met by the filing of a continuing application. In an application or patent, abandoned or lapsed for failure to pay the issue fee or any portion thereof, the required reply must be the payment of the issue fee or any outstanding balance thereof.

The Commissioner is responsible for determining the standard for unavoidable delay and for applying that standard.

"In the specialized field of patent law, . . . the Commissioner of Patent and Trademarks is primarily responsible for the application and enforcement of the various narrow and technical statutory and regulatory provisions. The Commissioner's interpretation of those provisions is entitled to considerable deference."[3]

"[T]he Commissioner's discretion cannot remain wholly uncontrolled, if the facts **clearly** demonstrate that the applicant's delay in prosecuting the application was unavoidable, and that the Commissioner's adverse determination lacked **any** basis in reason or common sense."[4]

"The court's review of a Commissioner's decision is 'limited, however, to a determination of whether the agency finding was arbitrary, capricious, an abuse of discretion, or otherwise not in accordance with the law.'"[5]

"The scope of review under the arbitrary and capricious standard is narrow and a court is not to substitute its judgement for that of the agency."[6]

The standard

"[T]he question of whether an applicant's delay in prosecuting an application was unavoidable must be decided on a case-by-case basis, taking all of the facts and circumstances into account."[7]

The general question asked by the Office is: "Did petitioner act as a reasonable and prudent person in relation to his most important business?"[8]

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[3]Rydeen v. Quigg, 748 F.Supp. 900, 904, 16 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1876 (D.D.C. 1990), aff'd without opinion (Rule 36), 937 F.2d 623 (Fed. Cir.1991) (citing Morganroth v. Quigg, 885 F.2d 843, 848, 12 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1125 (Fed. Cir. 1989); Ethicon, Inc. v. Quigg 849 F.2d 1422, 7 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA 1152 (Fed. Cir. 1988) ("an agency' interpretation of a statute it administers is entitled to deference"); see also Chevron U.S.A. Inc. v. Natural Resources Defence Council, Inc., 467 U.S. 837, 844, 81 L. Ed. 694, 104 S. Ct. 2778 (1984) ("if the statute is silent or ambiguous with respect to the specific issue, the question for the court is whether the agency's answer is based on a permissible construction of the statute.")

[4]Commissariat A L'Energie Atomique et al. v. Watson, 274 F.2d 594, 597, 124 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 126 (D.C. Cir. 1960) (emphasis added).

[5]Haines v. Quigg, 673 F. Supp. 314, 316, 5 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1130 (N.D. Ind. 1987) (citing Camp v. Pitts, 411 U.S. 138, 93 S. Ct.1241, 1244 (1973) (citing 5 U.S.C. §706 (2)(A)); Beerly v. Dept. of Treasury, 768 F.2d 942, 945 (7th Cir. 1985); Smith v. Mossinghoff, 217 U.S. App. D.C. 27, 671 F.2d 533, 538 (D.C. Cir.1982)).

[6]Ray v. Lehman, 55 F.3d 606, 608, 34 U.S.P.Q2d (BNA) 1786 (Fed. Cir. 1995) (citing Motor Vehicles Mfrs. Ass'n v. State Farm Mut. Auto. Ins. Co., 463 U.S. 29, 43, 77 L.Ed.2d 443, 103 S. Ct. 2856 (1983)).

[7]Id.

[8]See In re Mattulah, 38 App. D.C. 497 (D.C. Cir. 1912).

Nonawarness of a PTO rule will not constitute unavoidable delay.[9]

Application of the standard to the current facts and circumstances

In the instant petition, petitioner maintains that the circumstances that led to the abandonment of the application meet the aforementioned unavoidable standard and, therefore; petitioner qualifies for relief under 37 CFR 1.137(a). In support thereof, petitioner asserts that "according to the joined letter to Assistant Commissioner for Patents, the ultimate date for response under 35 USC 133 was June 11, 2001." The Office cannot ascertain what this "joined letter" is, and it is equally mysterious how the petitioner arrived at this date as the expiration of the period for response.

Petitioner further explains: "the writing of the response begun on May 28, for a sending on June 9 or 10. The Notice of Abandonment mailed on May 31 interrupts this writing. After investigation, the applicant brought to the abandonment was unjustified, but that the Notice of Abandonment interrupted the prosecution. The reply was not timely filed only because the applicant thought that the prosecution was interrupted by the Notice of Abandonment."

With regard to item (3) above, the aforementioned argument of petitioner in support of petitioner's belief that the above-cited application was unavoidably abandoned are not persuasive. Petitioner's argument, and the reason the argument must necessarily fail, is addressed below.

The petitioner is certainly correct in his belief that prosecution was interrupted by the Notice of Abandonment. Unfortunately, it is equally certain that this interruption was necessitated by his failure to fully respond to the non-final Office action of July 8, 1999. It appears that the petitioner miscalculated the period for response, and as such, caused the application to go abandoned. This mistake on the part of the petitioner might constitute an unintentional delay in prosecution, but it certainly does not rise to the level of unavoidable. As stated above, nonawarness of a PTO rule will not constitute unavoidable delay, and it follows that misinterpretation of the same would lead to the same result.

Therefore, it is determined that the petitioner cannot establish that the entire delay in filing the required reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(a) was unavoidable which is required in order for relief to be granted under 37 CFR 1.137(a).

Petitioner may wish to consider filing a petition to revive based on unintentional abandonment under 37 CFR 1.137(b). A grantable petition pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(b) must be accompanied by the required reply (already submitted), the required petition fee ($1,240.00 for a large entity and $620.00 for a verified small entity), and a statement that the **entire** delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to 37 CFR 1.137(b) was unintentional. A copy of a blank petition form PTO/SB/64 is enclosed for

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[9] See Smith v. Mossinghoff, 671 F.2d 533, 538, 213 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 977 (Fed. Cir. 1982) (citing Potter v. Dann, 201 U.S.P.Q. (BNA) 574 (D.D.C. 1978) for the proposition that counsel's nonawarness of PTO rules does not constitute "unavoidable" delay)). Although court decisions have only addressed the issue of lack of knowledge of an attorney, there is no reason to expect a different result due to lack of knowledge on the part of a pro se (one who prosecutes on his own) applicant. It would be inequitable for a court to determine that a client who spends his hard earned money on an attorney who happens not to know a specific rule should be held to a higher standard than a pro se applicant who makes (or is forced to make) the decision to file the application without the assistance of counsel.

petitioner's convenience.

Further correspondence with respect to this matter should be addressed as follows:

By mail: Commissioner for Patents
Box DAC
Washington, DC 20231

By facsimile: (703) 308-6916
Attn: Office of Petitions

By hand: Office of Petitions
2201 South Clarke Place
Crystal Plaza 4, Suite 3C23
Arlington, Virginia 22202

Telephone inquiries should be directed to Paul Shanoski, Petitions Attorney, at (703) 305-0011.

Beverly M. Flanagan
Supervisory Petitions Examiner
Office of Petitions
Office of the Deputy Commissioner
for Patent Examination Policy

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PTO/SB/64